



ILLUMINATIONS

A quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

THE BARON S. BARNES HOUSE: A LOST LANDMARK

by Esley Hamilton

When E. G. Lewis started buying land in what became University City, almost the only landmark in the area was the palatial home of Baron S. Barnes. It stood at the southwest corner of Big Bend (then called Pennsylvania) and Delmar, this portion of which was then called Bonhomme. Isolated from any other buildings except its own service buildings and a smaller house at the southeast corner of the intersection, it was visible from a long distance. (See U. City's online digital photo collection digital File f137p1840.)

The recent digitization of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* by ProQuest has made all the issues through 1922 searchable, and this is gradually revealing answers to many long-held questions. One of them was who designed the Barnes House, and we now know from an announcement published on February 16, 1896, that it was Barnett, Haynes & Barnett. George Dennis Barnett (1863-1922) and Tom P. Barnett (1870-1929) were sons of George I. Barnett (1815-1989), the foremost architect of nineteenth-century St. Louis. They had been practicing together with George D.'s brother-in-law John I. Haynes since the early 1890s, originally in the Romanesque Revival

style popular then. By the middle of the decade, however, they had become proficient in the newly fashionable Renaissance and Beaux Arts styles, and they designed several surviving landmarks, including the Union Avenue gates of Kingsbury Place and the Faust House at One Portland Place. They participated in the World's Fair and developed a national reputation, building the Illinois Athletic Club in Chicago and Adolphus Hotel in Dallas. They produced many Catholic churches and institutions here and elsewhere, most notably the New Cathedral on Lindell.

Many of their largest houses have disappeared, including the Barnes residence, but the *Post-Dispatch* article gives us an idea of its attractions, along with its estimated cost of \$125,000, a fortune in those days. It was built entirely of Bedford, Indiana limestone and was square in plan, 100 by 100 feet. The primary façade faced north, displaying rusticated ground floor stonework and smooth ("ashlar") stone above, rising to a richly detailed cornice. The second-floor windows were framed like tabernacles, with arched or pointed pediments, and the roof had pedimented dormers on all sides. The Delmar front was underlined by

continued on p. 3

The Historical Society

of University City

6701 Delmar Blvd.

University City, Missouri 63130

Books published by the

Historical Society and gift items

can be purchased year round at

the University City Library.

HSUC merchandise is on display

in a case opposite the circulation

desk at the Library.

A Message from the President by Eleanor Mullin

Another year underway, and HSUC keeps planning and preserving. As you see in this issue, our three first programs are in place. Here's an update on our other activities.

You should shortly receive your membership renewal request; we are streamlining that process so that all memberships run with the calendar year. We are still waiting for bids on the repair to the Lions. We are making progress on setting up our independent website.

Century Home Plaques: a large number of homes will qualify in the next few years. The fee is \$100.00 for members, and the application form is very simple. If your home has reached this milestone, please consider 'honoring' it with a plaque.

Our Board would like to extend a special

welcome to our newest member, Gabe Fleisher. I believe he has 'made history' as the youngest member of our society. Gabe is ten years old, and attends Flynn Park School. In fact he is working on compiling a history of Flynn Park, and has come to the library to research, and spoken with our archivist Sue Rekhopf several times. Gabe, the rest of the Board hopes to meet you at our programs, and we are happy to help you in any way we can.

I want to mention the passing at the age of 103 of Wanda Bowers, whose entire career was teaching first Drama, then English at our high school. Wanda left two extensive journals about her career, and they will be given to us for our archives. Stay warm, and I hope to see many of you March 5th at the State of the City Event.

Cut and Keep: Spring Programs Reminder

Historical Society 2012 Programs

State of the City *Mayor Welsch and City Manager Walker* 7 pm Monday, March 5 * City Hall, 6801 Delmar, fifth floor.

Following up on last year's well-received event. Mayor Shelley Welsch and City Manager Lehman Walker will talk about recent successes and challenges current and to come. Topics may include the budget process, the Mayor's recent trip to Washington to attend the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the task forces on youth and "bikability/walkability," the new Chamber of Commerce and the start-date for construction of the Delmar Trolley. We'll get the latest news from U. City's top officials.

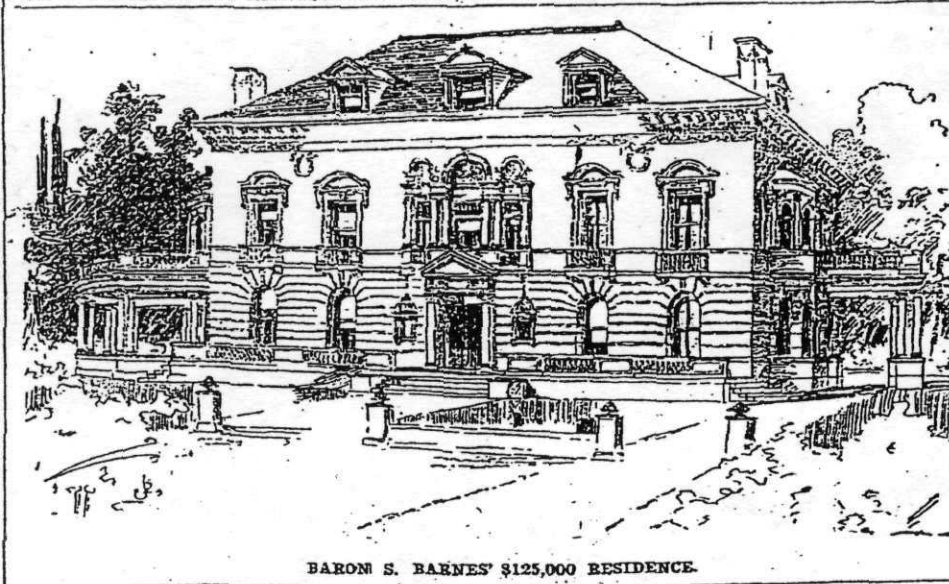
Book Signing * *University City Schools: Our First 100 Years* * Alan Spector * 7 pm Thursday, April 19 * University City Public Library 6701 Delmar, second floor.

Alan Spector (UCHS Class of 1964) grew up in the schools and on the playgrounds and ball fields of U. City and was recently selected for induction into the University City High School Hall of Fame. He has authored three previous books His second book, *Hail Hail to U City High*, was inspired by the continued closeness of his high school class, over four decades after they graduated. Copies of *University City Schools* will be available for purchase (\$50) and signing by the author.

Ulysses and Julia Grant and the Importance of Family * Pam Sanfilippo * 7 pm Tuesday, May 22 * At the Library.

Park Historian at Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, (White Haven), Pam began her public history career with the National Park Service as a seasonal park ranger in 1995 and became the site's historian in 1997. "Did you know Ulysses S. Grant was associated with the St. Louis area for over 40 years?" she asks. "Most people know of him as the General who won the Civil War for the Union, or as President of the United States, but his St. Louis ties were more personal. Learn more about Ulysses Grant as husband and father, his wife Julia Dent Grant, and the important role family played in their lives during this 30-minute slide presentation."

The north facade will have beautifully office rooms, particularly from representation the house will be completed and



continued from p. 1

a stone terrace with a balustrade and mosaic floor. The east side of the house featured a semicircular stone porch with balcony, while the west side had a similarly detailed rectangular porte-cochere.

Visitors approached the first floor through an oval vestibule, finished in marble and gold. The grand central hall was paneled in quartered oak in the style of the Italian Renaissance. It opened on the left into the 20 by 40-foot drawing room, decorated in French Empire style. The dining room was in what the paper called old English style, with mahogany paneling. Other rooms on this floor included the den, breakfast room, butler's pantry, kitchen, cold storage rooms, and other service areas. The second floor had several bedrooms, a sitting room, reading room, and baths. More bedrooms were on the third floor under the hipped roof, including servants' quarters. The "modern conveniences" incorporated into the house included electric lights, private telephones communicating with the servants' quarters, and a freight elevator. The large stable southwest of the house was a significant work of architecture in its own right (see File f137p5183).

Surprisingly, there was already a house on the site, and the paper reported that it would be moved to another part of the property. Since only one other house was nearby before Lewis started building, the older house must have been the rather substantial brick and white-painted shingle Queen Anne house seen in photos taken after the move at the southeast corner of the intersection. (In our online photo collection it is seen from the west in File s002p5136 and from the east, with its three-

story turret in File f167p1845.) That house was acquired by Frank and Maie Cabot, both associates of E. G. Lewis, but was destroyed by fire on February 9, 1914. The present house on that site, 9656 Delmar, dates from 1937, but the old fence survives.

The Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis by William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, published in 1899, stated in its entry on Barnes, "His home on the heights west of St. Louis, on what is known as the Old Bonhomme Road, is one of the most beautiful of St. Louis' suburban residences and evidences the artistic tastes of its owner in its furnishings and embellishments." Barnes didn't have much time to enjoy the house, though, because he died on June 16, 1899 at the age of 54, while visiting Denver, Colorado. His family included a son Baron A. and daughters Edith and Annie Louisa, but he left everything to his wife Eva Saulsbury Barnes.

Toward the end of 1906 the family of Jackson and Minnie Johnson moved to the Barnes house from their former home at 4471 Washington Boulevard. Jackson Johnson (1859-1929) was the first president of Roberts, Johnson & Rand and later became president and then board chairman of International Shoe. His first cousin and business partner Frank Rand built the house immediately to the west at 7100 Delmar in 1911, and later that year Johnson's daughter Helen Niedringhaus built 7104 Delmar while his daughter Florence Shinkle built 7108 Delmar.

University City might have attracted more houses on this scale, but on January 12, 1915, the Barnes-Johnson House was completely gutted by fire. Everyone escaped –

continued on p. 4



The Historical Society of University City
6701 Delmar Blvd.
University City MO 63130

Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1729

**Inside:
A Lost U. City Mansion
by Esley Hamilton**

continued from p. 3

Jackson, Minnie, their children Andrew and Ada, and servants Isabel Duncan and Mary Brown – but the contents were a total loss, including a \$10,000 organ that had just been installed. Among the works of art destroyed was a portrait of the Viscountess Melville by Sir Thomas Lawrence dating from about 1800.

At first Johnson planned to rebuild, but just two months later he purchased the McMillan mansion at 25 Portland Place for \$130,000, considered to be well below its value. Johnson then subdivided the six acres that remained around the Delmar House after University Heights Number 3 had been laid out in 1909. The site extended through to Washington Avenue, which swept around it in a broad curve. Johnson called the new subdivision Phoenix Heights, a name referring to the legendary bird resurrected from its own ashes. He personally built four of the houses on the 22 lots in the subdivision. Judy Little has identified several features from the old house that were reused in new ones, including two sets of stone steps at 7000 Delmar; the carved stone window surrounds in the west wall of 7042 Delmar; details around the front door and the carriage house at 7025 Washington; the central first-floor window at 7033 Washington. See if you can identify them the next time you're in the area.

Library Events

The Friends of the U. City Library, who are co-hosting the April 19 booksigning with the HSUC, are also hosting a poetry reading with former Missouri poet laureate David Clewell at 7 pm April 23 and a Trivia Night May 12 (doors open 6 pm), both at the library.